

DECISION MEMO
SPECIAL USE AUTHORIZATION
RICH MOUNTAIN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE UTILITY CORRIDORS
U.S. FOREST SERVICE
MENA-ODEN RANGER DISTRICT
POLK COUNTY, ARKANSAS

BACKGROUND

Rich Mountain Electric Cooperative, Inc. has submitted three applications for amending their existing special use permit for installation and maintenance of overhead powerlines, including clearing and maintenance of 30-foot-wide rights-of-way, 15 feet on each side of the power lines with additional width as necessary to accommodate guy wires and anchors. Pine and hardwood trees within the rights-of-way would be removed and marketed as appropriate. The three applications were received and are described below.

- A three phase 7.6/13.2 kV loop feed service line to the City of Mena water treatment facility at Irons Fork Lake. Length of line to be 1,400 feet (approximately 1 acre total). Township 1 South, Range 29 West, Section 18 of Polk County, AR.
- A reroute of the existing three phase 7.6/13.2 kV service line to the City of Mena water treatment facility at Irons Fork Lake. Length of the line to be 4,312 feet (approximately 3 acres total). Township 1 South, Range 29 West, Section 19 of Polk County, AR.
- A single phase 7.6 kV service line to private property off of PK 64 (Shady Lake Entrance Road). Length of the line to be 1,383 feet (approximately 1 acre total). Township 4 South, Range 28 West, Section 31 of Polk County, AR.

These powerlines are collocated over county and NFS roads, resulting in an area of disturbance that is broken and discontinuous.

DECISION

I have decided to approve the utility corridors as described above for installation and maintenance of overhead powerlines, including clearing and maintenance of 30 foot-wide rights-of-way, 15 feet on each side of the power line with additional width as necessary to accommodate guy wires and anchors.

This activity falls into a category of action that may be excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA), which the Chief of the Forest Service has determined will not have a significant effect on the human environment:

Approval, modification, or continuation of minor special uses of NFS lands that require less than five contiguous acres of land (36 CFR 220.6(e)(3))

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. I took into account resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist:

- Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species – The project may affect; likely to adversely affect the Northern Long-eared Bat. The project may also impact individuals, but not likely to cause a trend to federal listing or loss of viability to the Tricoloured bat, Caddo Mountain Salamander, Ozark chinquapin, Waterfall's sedge, and Iron's Fork burrowing crayfish. A Biological Evaluation was completed March 6, 2020.
- Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds – there are no floodplains or jurisdictional wetlands within the project area, and none will be impacted by project activities. The powerlines accessing The City of Mena water treatment facility at Irons Fork Lake are located within The City of Mena's municipal watershed. The other project area is not located within a municipal watershed.
- Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas – none are present within the project area; none will be affected.
- Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas – none are present within the project area; none will be affected.
- Research natural areas – none are present within the project area; none will be affected.
- American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites – none are present within the project area; none will be affected.
- Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas – there are known historic properties located within the project area. Work within the historic property (portions of two powerlines) must be monitored by an archeologist, archeology technician or advanced paraprofessional. Additionally, some trees within those historic properties may be required to be felled and left in place or removed by non-ground-disturbing methods. All work must stop immediately, and a Forest Service archeologist must be contacted, if any prehistoric or historic features greater than 50 years in age, human remains, or other significant cultural resources are discovered during project activities.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This action was originally listed as a proposal on the Ouachita National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions and updated periodically during the analysis. Scoping was conducted through February 24, 2020. No comments were received.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

This decision is consistent with the Ouachita National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan as required by the National Forest Management Act.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (OBJECTION) OPPORTUNITIES

Decisions that are categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) are not subject to an administrative review process (pre-decisional objection process) (Agriculture Act of 2014, Subtitle A, Sec. 8006).

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

The project may be implemented immediately.

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Jennifer Benefield, Natural Resources Manager, Mena-Oden Ranger District, 1603 Hwy 71North Mena AR 71953, 479-394-2382.

/s/ Lori Bell for

10/16/2020

Troy Heithecker
Forest Supervisor

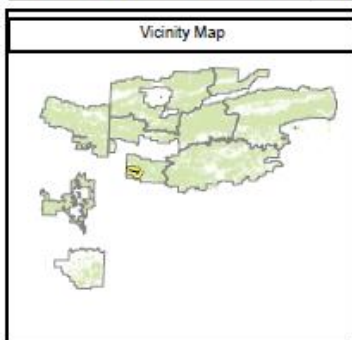
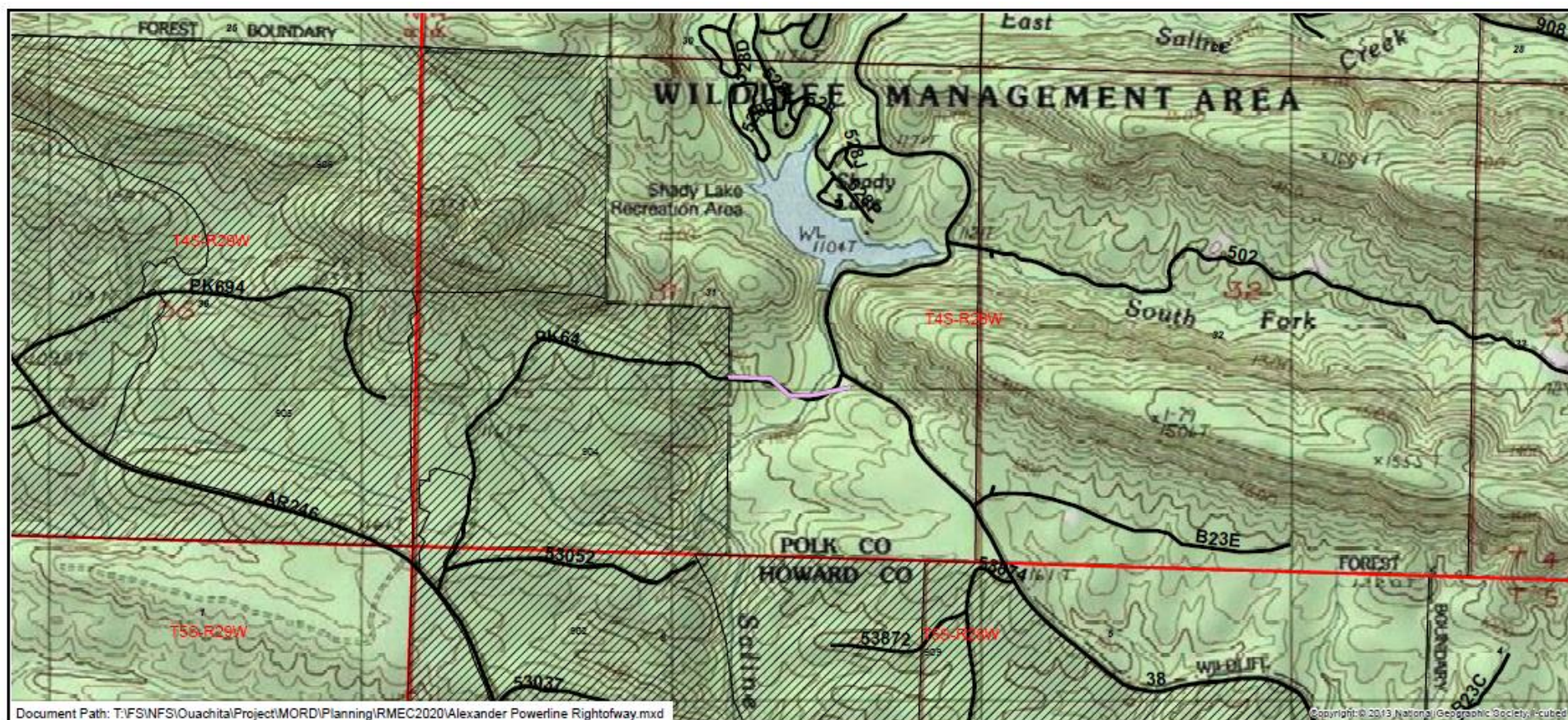
Date

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender



The Forest Service uses the most current and complete data available. GIS data and product accuracy may vary. They may be developed from sources of differing accuracy, accurate only at certain scales, based on modeling or interpretation, and incomplete while being created or revised, etc. Using GIS products for purposes other than those for which they were created may yield inaccurate or misleading results. This information was released on the date shown below. The Forest Service reserves the right to correct, update, modify, or replace GIS products without notification. Designation of a road, trail or area for motor vehicle use by a particular class of vehicle under 36 CFR 212.51 is not represented on this map. It is the responsibility of the user to acquire the current Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM). The MVUM identifies those roads and trails designated for the motor vehicle use under 36 CFR 212.51 for the purpose of enforcing the prohibition at 36 CFR 261.13.

Legend

- Alexander Powerline Rightofway
- wetland_polygon
- Private
- Road

0 0.15 0.3 0.6 Miles

Sheet 1 of 1

1:12,000

Date Saved: 9/25/2020 12:30:21 PM

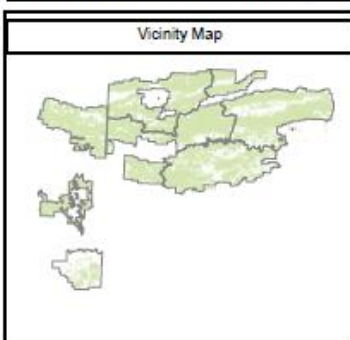
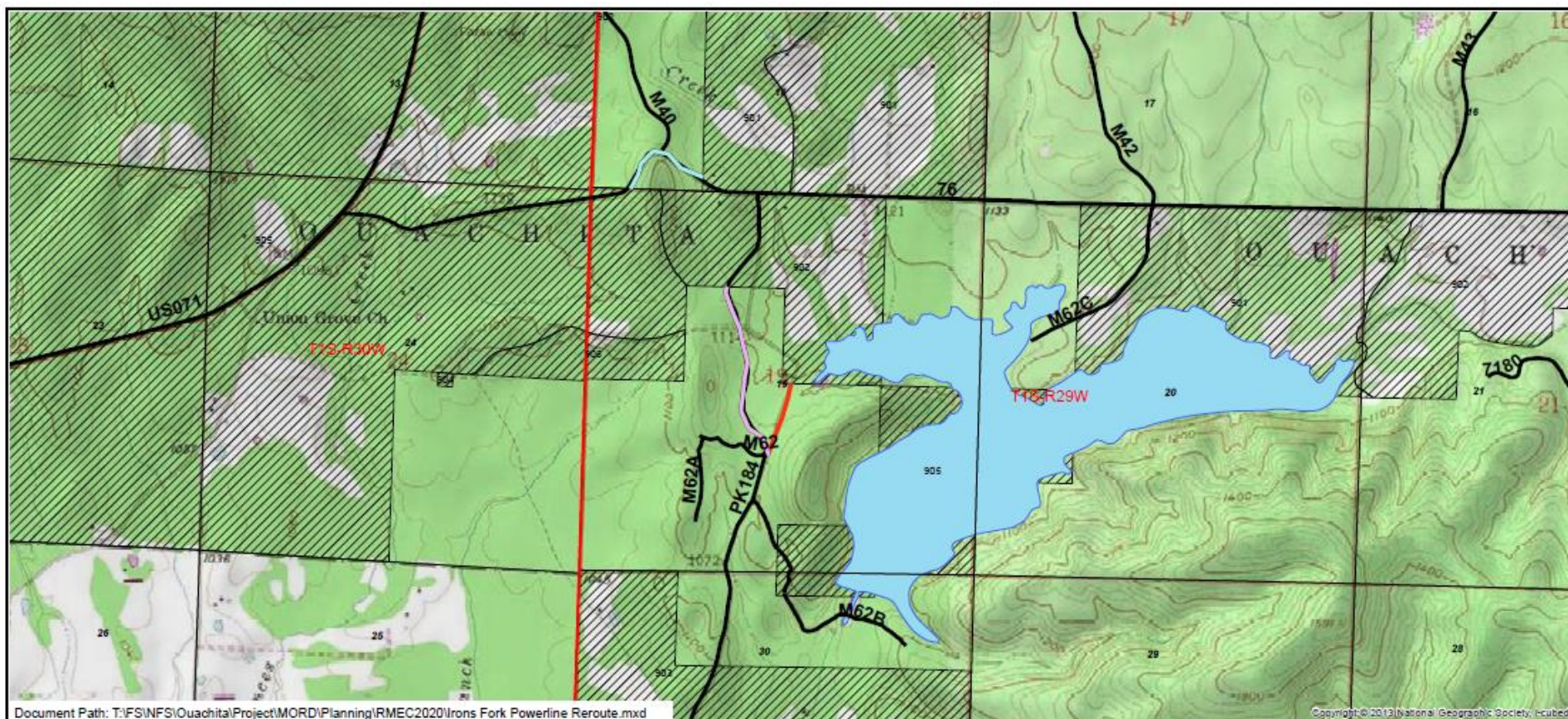
RMEC Alexander Powerline

RMEC 2020

Mena-Oden Ranger District
Polk County, Arkansas

U.S. Forest Service - R8
Ouachita National Forest

For more information, contact the Mena
Ranger District at 1603 Hwy. 71 North,
Mena, AR or phone (479) 394-2382



The Forest Service uses the most current and complete data available. GIS data and product accuracy may vary. They may be developed from sources of differing accuracy, accurate only at certain scales, based on modeling or interpretation, and incomplete while being created or revised, etc. Using GIS products for purposes other than those for which they were created may yield inaccurate or misleading results. This information was released on the date shown below. The Forest Service reserves the right to correct, update, modify, or replace GIS products without notification. Designation of a road, trail or area for motor vehicle use by a particular class of vehicle under 36 CFR 212.51 is not represented on this map. It is the responsibility of the user to acquire the current Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM). The MVUM identifies those roads and trails designated for the motor vehicle use under 36 CFR 212.51 for the purpose of enforcing the prohibition at 36 CFR 261.13.

0 0.175 0.35 0.7 Miles

Legend

- Irons Fork Utility New Line
- Irons Fork Utility ReRoute
- Irons Fork Utility Decommission
- Road
- Lake
- Private

Sheet 1 of 1
1:15,840

Date Saved: 9/25/2020 1:01:39 PM

Irons Fork Utility Reroute, Decommission,
and New line

RMEC 2020

Mena-Oden Ranger District
Polk County, Arkansas

U.S. Forest Service - R8
Ouachita National Forest

For more information, contact the Mena
Ranger District at 1603 Hwy. 71 North,
Mena, AR or phone (479) 394-2382